

## THE CHAK DYNASTY IN JAMMU AND KASHMIR: A FORGOTTEN LEGACY

<sup>\*1</sup>Shabir Ahmad Lone, <sup>2</sup>R Abida Begum

<sup>\*1</sup>Research Scholar of History, Annamalai University, Annamalai Nagar-608002, Tamil Nadu, India

<sup>2</sup>Assistant Professor, Department of Historical Studies, Quaid-e-Millath, Government College for Women (Autonomous)  
Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India

Correspondence mail: loneshabir714@gmail.com

Phone no: 7006808798

Received : 12 January 2025

Published : 30 March 2025

Revised : 31 January 2025

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.59733/jishup.v3i1.124>

Accepted : 22 February 2025

Publish Link : <https://jishup.org/index.php/ojs>

### Abstract

Marcus Garvey, a proponent of Black Nationalism in the United States, likened a people without historical awareness to a tree without roots. Inspired by this perspective, I explored the historical canon of Kashmir, Jammu, and other Chak Dynasty territories. As residents of Jammu and Kashmir, understanding regional history is crucial. This study examines the Chak Dynasty's legacy, highlighting its governance from 1561 to 1586. Although administrative records are scarce, the Chaks maintained and reinforced existing institutions. The research investigates their rule, emphasizing their influence on Kashmir's political and economic structures and its transition under Muslim dominion.

**Keywords:** *Chak, Dynasty, Rule, Religion and Administration*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The Shah Mir dynasty governed Kashmir from 1339 to 1555 CE, ruling for 216 years under 18 successive monarchs. Following this period, the Chak dynasty came to power, reigning from 1555 to 1586 CE with four rulers, beginning with Ghazi Shah Chak and concluding with Yusuf Shah Chak. However, in 1586, Mughal Emperor Akbar invaded Kashmir and annexed it into the Mughal Empire. Given Kashmir's breathtaking natural beauty, numerous dynasties sought control over the region. Each ruling dynasty had distinct administrative structures, and the Chak dynasty, despite its relatively brief rule, witnessed notable transformations in its governance and political framework. The Mughal conquest of Kashmir in 1586 was facilitated by Emperor Akbar's diplomatic strategy, which laid the groundwork for Mughal dominance in the region. However, the foundation of Mughal power in the Indian subcontinent was established earlier when Babur defeated Ibrahim Lodi, solidifying his rule. Historically, the Chak people are believed to have ancestral ties to the Dar tribe of Gilgit-Hunza. Historians suggest that the Chaks migrated from Dardistan (Gilgit-Hunza region) before establishing their rule in Kashmir. Their rise was supported by Shah Mir, who integrated Chak warriors into his military forces. Renowned for their physical strength and strategic acumen, the Chaks gained significant influence in Kashmir. However, their dominance faced setbacks during the reign of Sultan Zainul Abidin. Notably, Pando Chak emerged as a prominent ruler during this period. The Chaks, predominantly Shia, later faced discrimination under Mirza Haider Doulat, particularly against Sunni followers.

The resurgence of Chak power and influence in Kashmir coincided with the death of Mirza Haider Doulat. The Chaks strategically strengthened their authority by forming marriage alliances with prominent landowning families, which enhanced their control and solidified their sovereignty in the region. The Chak dynasty operated through a hierarchical system, with multiple ruling lords assuming control at different periods. The formal establishment of Chak rule in Kashmir took place when Gazi Shah Chak overthrew Sultan Habib Shah, the last ruler of the Sultanate Dynasty, between 1561 and 1563. This political transition marked a significant shift in Kashmir's governance. However, as Gazi Chak's health deteriorated in the later years of his rule, the dynasty faced challenges in maintaining its dominance. Consequently, in 1563, his brother, Hussain Shah Chak, ascended the throne and governed Kashmir until 1570. Throughout its reign, the Chak dynasty witnessed the rule of several capable monarchs who played crucial roles in shaping Kashmir's political landscape. They diligently worked to establish a distinct and efficient administrative system that contributed to the region's governance and stability. Despite facing various

internal and external pressures, the Chaks left a lasting impact on Kashmir's political and social structures, demonstrating their resilience and strategic governance.

### 2. RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

- The purpose of this study is to explore the Chak Dynasty's legacy in Jammu and Kashmir, as well as the religious and governmental frameworks established by its successors between 1339 and 1555 A.D.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

This study's data was primarily gathered from primary and secondary sources. To establish a study framework and reach an objective conclusion, historical and contemporary materials were used without bias. This examination focused on the origins and governance of Chaks in Kashmir.

### 4. DISCUSSION AND RESULT

#### 4.1 MUHAMMAD GHAZI SHAH CHAK (1555 CE)

Nasir ud-din Muhammad Ghazni Shah, the inaugural Chak Sultan of Kashmir, ascended to the throne in 1561 and ruled until 1563 under the title Ghazni Shah. A scholar and visionary leader, he dedicated significant efforts to addressing the various challenges afflicting the state. One of his primary concerns was the restoration of the state's financial stability, which had been gradually undermined by a combination of political and environmental factors. To strengthen governance, he appointed high-ranking governors to oversee the administration of justice, demonstrating his deep commitment to the principles of fairness and equity. Through strategic military and administrative efforts, Ghazni Shah successfully reclaimed several traditional territories of the monarchy, including Skardu, Gilgit, Kiahtwar, and Pakli, thereby reinforcing the sovereignty of his rule. His reign also witnessed a relative period of stability and religious tolerance, despite his adherence to Shi'ism. He upheld the principle of religious freedom, allowing people of diverse faiths to practice their beliefs without hindrance. However, historical accounts, particularly from *Nawadrial Akbar*, characterize him as possessing an inherently intolerant disposition. Ghazni Shah exhibited remarkable leadership qualities and sought to enhance the efficiency of administration. His governance included a specialized department responsible for vigilance and maintaining governmental dynamism. In his efforts to safeguard the state from Mughal invasions, he established a robust system of law and order, reinforcing the security and stability of Kashmir during his reign.

#### 4.2 YUSUF SHAH CHAK (1579 - 1586 CE)

Yousuf Shah Chak, the ruler of Kashmir from 1579 to 1586 AD, succeeded his father, Ali Shah Chak, as the leader of the region. Notably, he was the last independent Muslim ruler to govern the Kashmir Valley before its annexation by the Mughal Empire. The Chak dynasty, which included both Sunni and Nurbakhshiya Sufi factions, was internally divided. While some historians consider the Nurbakhshiya Sufis an offshoot of Shi'ism, the Sunni branch of the Chak tribe was led by figures such as Regi Chak and Shams Chak. The Chaks, who were relatively recent converts to Islam, were previously known by Hindu names such as Shankar, Pandu, and Lankar. Yousuf Shah Chak was also a patron of Kashmiri literature and culture. He married the renowned Kashmiri poet Hubba Khotan, also known as Zoon or Zooni, further cementing his reputation as a romantic figure. However, his inclination towards luxury contributed to the decline of administrative efficiency. Seeking to regain his authority, he traveled to Agra in hopes of negotiating with Emperor Akbar for support in restoring his monarchical position. Despite his political struggles, Yousuf Shah Chak implemented several progressive reforms, including the abolition of multiple taxes, such as the Mir Bhari tax (a levy on boot carriers), the bagger system, and the Jaziya tax on non-Muslims. However, his reign was marred by internal instability, exacerbated by the incompetence of several ministers and nobles, including Haider Chak and Muhammad Bhat, which ultimately led to an uprising against his rule.

#### 4.3 ADMINISTRATION UNDER THE CHAK DYNASTY

The Chaks first arrived in Kashmir during the reign of Suhadeva, and their status as permanent residents was later formalized by Sultan Shams ud-Din. Their influence and prestige grew significantly during the reign of Muhammad Shah, primarily through strategic marital alliances with the ruling dynasty. These relationships enabled them to establish a political foothold in the region. Over time, through their discretion, determination, perseverance, and military prowess, the Chaks successfully outmanoeuvred their rivals and emerged as the dominant force in the country. As adherents of the Shia sect of Islam, the Chaks upheld a policy of religious tolerance, affirming the right of all individuals to practice their faith freely without external restrictions. Their governance system was structured as a monarchy in both legal and political terms, yet it did not function as an unchecked dictatorship. Instead, the

Chak rulers operated within a framework of checks and balances, with the law, the nobility, and the Ulama playing significant roles in regulating their authority. However, the effectiveness of this governance structure was largely contingent on the capabilities and disposition of the ruling monarch. Under Chak rule, the *Khutba* was recited in their name, and coins were minted in their honor, symbolizing their sovereignty. They exercised absolute control over all branches of government, including the executive, legislative, and judicial functions. Despite their centralized authority, the Chak rulers were known for their benevolence toward their subjects, and their style of governance can be characterized as an enlightened autocracy.

## 4.4 THE RELIGION OF THE CHAK DYNASTY

The Chak dynasty was the first Shi'a ruling dynasty to establish dominance in northern India. Renowned for their architectural contributions, the Chaks also played a pivotal role in the promotion and dissemination of Shiism. As adherents of the Shi'a sect of Islam, they upheld the principle that every individual had the right to freely practice their religion without restrictions or coercion. Ali Shah Chak placed significant emphasis on religious doctrines as a guiding framework for governance, integrating religious principles into administrative affairs to ensure the effective functioning of the state. The importance of this approach is highlighted by Kaka, who underscores its broader implications within the political and religious landscape of Kashmir.

The conversion of two prominent non-Shi'a figures to Shiism had a profound impact, as it attracted a broader following and strengthened the sect's influence. Many Shi'a adherents believed that if the Reshi—an influential spiritual group within Kashmiri society—embraced their beliefs, Shiism could establish a dominant presence across the region. The Chaks did not impose their religious ideology on the Reshi but rather engaged in open dialogue with them as a strategic means of securing their support. This approach aimed to integrate the Reshi into the Shi'a fold, recognizing their significant influence over the majority of the Kashmiri population. This initiative was undertaken during a period of political stability when the Chak rulers were consolidating their administrative control over Kashmir. Several key figures within the Chak lineage, including the descendants of Pandu Chak, Hussain Chak, and Kaji Chak, embraced Shiism. Among them, Kaji Chak emerged as the most notable patron of the Mir Shamsu-d-Din Iraqi religious community. Their conversions were directly influenced by the teachings and legacy of Mir Shamsu-d-Din Iraqi, further cementing the spread of Shiism under the Chak dynasty's rule.

The expansion of Shiism in Kashmir became particularly evident with the rise of Kaji Chak, a Shi'a leader, to the influential position of *wazir* and kingmaker. His ascension provided the Shi'a community with newfound confidence in openly expressing and propagating their religious rituals, beliefs, and worldview. This period also saw increased engagement in theological discourse, as Shi'a scholars actively participated in debates and discussions with Sufis, Reshi ascetics, and scholars from other Islamic traditions. Sayyid Ali documents instances where Shi'a adherents sought to challenge the spiritual authority of Sunni Sufis and Kashmiri Rishis in ways that had not been observed under previous rulers. These confrontations were intended to demonstrate the perceived superiority of Shi'a theology, with the ultimate aim of encouraging conversions. *Tawarikh Kashmiri* recounts how Baba Lusti, a disciple of Baba Hanafu-d-Din, ascended to the leadership of the Reshi order during the reign of Malik Kaji Chak. His rise was partly in response to the religious discord (*fitna*) he experienced, as he faced persecution from Shi'a factions due to his Sunni beliefs. Furthermore, some Reshi figures, such as Shungli Reshi and Beni Kaka, abandoned their Sunni traditions, allegedly due to a perceived lack of spiritual resilience. Sayyid Ali expresses strong disapproval of Ahungli Reshi and Beni Kaka for adopting Shiism, interpreting their conversion as a compromise made to align with the teachings of Shams-u-Din Iraqi. This period marked a significant shift in Kashmir's religious landscape, as Shi'a ideology gained prominence and exerted influence over key religious figures.

The rise of Kaji Chak to the powerful position of *wazir* and kingmaker gave a major boost to Shiism in Kashmir. With a Shi'a leader in such an influential role, the Shi'a community felt more confident in openly practicing and spreading their beliefs, rituals, and perspectives. They actively engaged in debates and discussions with Sufis, Reshi ascetics, and scholars from other Islamic sects, something that hadn't been seen much before. Sayyid Ali mentions several instances where Shi'as directly challenged the spiritual authority of Sunni Sufis and Kashmiri Rishis. The idea was to prove the superiority of their beliefs, which in turn led to more conversions to Shiism. *Tawarikh Kashmiri* tells the story of Baba Lusti, one of the sons of Baba Hanafud-Din, who became the leader of the Reshi order during the reign of Malik Kaji Chak. This was a time of religious tension (*fitna*), and Shi'a groups reportedly persecuted Baba Lusti for his Sunni beliefs. Some Reshi figures, like Shungli Reshi and Beni Kaka, eventually abandoned their Sunni practices, supposedly due to a lack of strong spiritual conviction. Sayyid Ali was particularly shocked by how Ahungli Reshi and Beni Kaka embraced Shiism, seeing it as a major turning point. By the time these two converted, many of their followers had already been won over by Shiism. It's likely that the Shi'a leaders believed that if the Reshi accepted their teachings, Shiism could spread across all of Kashmir. Their

discussions with the Reshi weren't just religious debates—they were a strategic move to gain influence over a highly respected part of Kashmiri Muslim society. At the same time, the Shi'as weren't outright attacking the Reshi. Instead, they used dialogue and persuasion to bring them into the fold. This shift happened during a period of political stability when the Chak rulers were strengthening their hold over Kashmir's administration.

### 4.5 ARCHITECTURE OF CHAKS

The Muzaffarabad Fort, also known as the Red Fort, is a historic fortress built in the 17th century in Muzaffarabad, Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Pakistan. It was originally constructed by the Chak dynasty of Kashmir and is locally called "Rutta Qila" or simply "Qila." The Chak rulers built the fort in 1559 at a strategic location, recognizing the threat posed by the Mughals. However, when Kashmir became part of the Mughal Empire in 1587, the fort lost its importance. Later, in 1646, Sultan Muzaffar Khan of the Bomba Dynasty, the founder of Muzaffarabad, completed its construction.

### 5. CONCLUSION

The Chaks who went to Kashmir from Darads, also known as Dardistan, were noted for their violent behaviour and physical strength. Shah Mir established the Sultanate, elevating his subjects to the forefront of society. During Zainul Abidin's reign, Pandu Chak led the people. However, due to his premeditated activities, the Sultan executed him and numerous other notable Chaks. After migrating to Kupwara and Trahgam, the remaining Chak families were known as the Kupwari Chaks and Trahgami Chaks. Historians unanimously agree that the Chaks migrated from Darads, also referred to as Dardistan, to Kashmir. Known for their formidable physical strength, they were characterized by a fierce and unruly disposition.

During the establishment of the Sultanate by Shah Mir, the Chaks were integrated into key administrative and military roles through recruitment. During the reign of Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin, Pandu Chak emerged as a prominent leader of the community. However, his defiance led to his execution, along with several other notable Chaks, upon the Sultan's orders. Following this event, the remaining Chak families were dispersed across various regions, particularly in Kupwara and Trahgam. These groups later came to be identified as the Kupwari and Trahgami Chaks. Although Kashmir is often romanticized as a "paradise on earth," its history has been marked by continuous conflict and warfare. Over time, the region has witnessed the rule of multiple dynasties, including the Mauryan, Pathan, Hun, Sultanate, Chak, Afghan, and Dogra dynasties, each leaving a distinct imprint on Kashmir's political and cultural landscape.

The dynasty that controlled the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir for the last time. Each dynasty had its own administrative structure and portfolio, each with a distinct name. Kashmir had various changes in its political, social, economic, cultural, and administrative institutions over time. Although the former dynasties are no longer present, remains of their culture and footsteps may still be observed in the valley.

### Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author affirms that there are no potential conflicts of interest concerning the research, authorship, or publication of this article.

### Funding

The author received no financial support for the research, authorship, and / or publication of this article.

### Acknowledgement

I sincerely appreciate the support and contributions of all those who assisted me in the development of this article. I am particularly grateful to everyone whose insights and encouragement played a crucial role in shaping my work. Additionally, I extend my gratitude to the experts and scholars who have conducted research on related topics; their valuable contributions and references provided essential guidance, enabling me to complete this article effectively.

### REFERENCES



1. Abass, G. (2006). Contribution of Kashmir to Persian Poetry during the Reign of Shahjahan (Doctoral dissertation, <http://www.researchgate.net>) Aligarh Muslim University). Abdel
2. Haleem, M. A. S. (2012). The jizya Verse (Q. 9: 29): Tax Enforcement on Non-Muslims in the First Muslim State. *Journal of Qur'anic Studies*, 14(2), 72-89. <http://www.scholar.google.com>
3. Abdullah, Darakhshan. "Religious Policy of the Sultans of Kashmir (1320-1586 AD)." PhD diss., Aligarh Muslim University, 1991.
4. Ahmad, A. (1979). Conversions to Islam in the Valley of Kashmir. *Central Asiatic Journal*, 23(1/2), 3-18. <http://www.scholar.google.com>.
5. Ahmad, K. B. (2017). *Kashmir: exposing the myth behind the narrative*. SAGE Publishing India.
6. Ahmad, Manzoor. "Mughals And Kashmir with Its Economy (1586-1752 AD)."
7. Ara, A. (2005). *Shahmiri Sultans of Kashmir—1339-1554*. In *Proceedings Punjab History Conference* (p. 141). Department of Punjab Historical Studies, Punjabi University. <http://www.scholar.google.com>.
8. Bhat, Momen, M. (1987). Appendix II. Shi'i Dynasties. In *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam* (pp. 304-309). Yale University Press.
9. W. A. (2020). *Gharana Tradition in Kashmiri Sufiana Mausiqui*. Vol. <http://www.researchgate.net>
10. Ganie, Zahied Rehman, and Mohammad Huzaif Bhat. "A Comparative Study of Kashmir Economy from Early Historical Times To the foundation of Muslim Rule."
11. Haig, T. W. (1918). The Chronology and Genealogy of the Muhammadan Kings of Kashmir. *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, 451-468. <http://www.scholar.google.com>
12. Hasan, M. (2005). *Kashmīr under the Sultans*. Aakar Books.
13. Hasan, M. M. (1954). Persian Sources for the History of Kashmir. *Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society*, 2(2), 116-124.
14. Hasan, M. (2002). *Kashmir under the Sultans*. Routledge.
15. Parmu, R. K. (1969). *A history of Muslim rule in Kashmir 1320-1819*.
16. Johar, P. (2019). Complementary identities, dichotomous constructions: Navigating religious, sectarian, and caste identities in Indian-occupied Kashmir. *Prabuddha: Journal of Social Equality*, 3(1), 77-105.
17. Khan, M. H. (1953, January). Some Aspects of Kashmir History Under the Shah Mirs and The Chaks. In *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* (Vol. 16, pp. <http://www.scholar.google.com>
18. Khan, M. H. (1953, January). Some aspects of Kashmir history under the Shah Mirs and the Chaks. In *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* (Vol. 16, pp. 194-200). Indian History Congress.
19. Khan, M. S. (2006). *The history of medieval Kashmir*. Gulshan Books.
20. Malik, A. H. (2014). Sufism and shi'ism in Medieval Kashmir: A Study of the Relation between State and Religion. *Research Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 5(2), 207-220. <http://www.researchgate.net>
21. Rai, M. (2004). *Hindu rulers, Muslim subjects: Islam, rights, and the history of Kashmir*. Princeton University Press.
22. Ray, S. C., & Panikkar, K. M. (1970). *Early history and culture of Kashmir*. (No Title).
23. Vani, N. A. D. (1987). *Muslim rule in Kashmir:(1554 AD to 1586 AD)*.
24. Zutshi, C. (2003). *Languages of belonging: Islam, regional identity, and the making of Kashmir*. Orient Blackswan.
25. Ishfaq Mir (2021) "Administration of Chak Dynasty in Kashmir during 1561-1586 A.D" *Innovations Content* available on Google Scholar [www.journal-innovations.com](http://www.journal-innovations.com) *Innovations*, Issue Number 64 April 2021
26. Mir, M. A., & Dar, F. A. *The Foundation of The Chak Dynasty and Its Administration: An Analytical Study of Kashmir*.
27. Khan, M. (2024). *Jammu and Kashmir*. In *The Territories and States of India 2024* (pp. 379-391). Routledge.
28. Bamzai, P. N. K. (1994). *Culture and political history of Kashmir* (Vol. 1). MD Publications Pvt. Ltd.
29. Hussain, S. (2021). *Society and politics of Jammu and Kashmir: An introduction* (pp. 1-30). Springer International Publishing.
30. Jacobs, R. (2024). *Kashmir's Struggle for Self-Determination*. Counter Punch.
31. Kamili, S. K. U. D., & Singh, T. P. *Jammu and Kashmir*. (No Title).

